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Book Review of Metaphysics and the Idea of God, by Wolfhart Pannenberg and translated by Philip Clayton

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been a place which Jesus visited, one where He most likely worked. Yet it is not mentioned anywhere in Matthew (or the NT, for that matter). Tiberias is only mentioned in the Gospel of John (6:1, 23; 21:1), not in Matthew. It is hard to imagine that if either of these cities were the place from which the Gospel came, no mention of Jesus' activity there would have been made. Instead, the only towns mentioned are small country towns like Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida.

These negative comments should not detract from the overall value of the work. Overman has been much more successful than most in using the tools of sociology and New Testament scholarship to provide a workable model of the formation of the Matthean community. His linking of the themes of lawlessness, righteousness, remnant, and hostility to Jewish leadership as found in near-contemporary sectarian literature with their treatment in the Gospel of Matthew is very helpful. Even if one does not share his assumption that the community is embedded in an exclusively Jewish context, most of his work is helpful. The work provides a coherent and well-argued reconstruction of one way of interpreting the available evidence. As such, it has done Matthean scholarship a service.

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Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*. Trans. by Philip Clayton. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990. xiv + 170 pp. Originally published as *Metaphysik und Gottesgedanke*. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988. \$21.95

Wolfhart Pannenberg writes under the conviction that "Christian theology is dependent upon the conversation with philosophy, especially for the clarification of its discourse about God, but also for its work on the relationship between God and created reality" (p. xiii). Pannenberg clearly states his purpose by pointing to the need, first, of pulling "together into a single context some of my reflections concerning philosophy," and secondly, of bringing "into explicit focus those connections with philosophical themes which in my earlier publications had remained peripheral or had been dealt with only implicitly" (p. xiii). Consequently, the reader should not expect a serious metaphysical analysis of the idea of God. Pannenberg is not interested in presenting his view on the being of God or in providing a clear metaphysical foundation for such an idea. He is interested, rather, in making the necessary philosophical room for his already existent position on God and theology.

In the first part of his book, Pannenberg treats rather general issues dealing with the idea of God in its relation to metaphysics. They are, first, the "end-of-metaphysics" approach, as proposed by Nietzsche, Dilthey, and Heidegger, which is rejected in chap. 1. Second, the classical problem of the One and the many is considered in chap. 2. Third, the idealism and transcendentalism of modern German philosophy are described and rejected in chap. 3. Fourth, the rejection of German Idealism presents the question regarding the

ground for the multiplicity of the temporal subject, namely, the identity of the subject. This brings Pannenberg to the discussion of the connection between Being and Time. Being, in its eternal timelessness, is considered to be the ultimate foundation for both the identity of the subject in particular, and the whole of reality in general (chap. 4). Fifth, "anticipation," as an enlargement and adaptation of the classical epistemological category of "concept," is described and suggested as the way in which the temporal subject may develop science on both temporal and eternal realities (chap. 5).

The second part of *Metaphysics and the Idea of God* is made up of revised versions of previously published articles on process philosophy (chap. 6), on the "part" and the "whole" (chap. 7), and on the question of theological meaning (chap. 8).

Pannenberg's approach to the metaphysical conceptualization of God finds Heidegger as its most serious obstacle. Heidegger not only presented a case for claiming the end of traditional metaphysics, but also worked out principles for its actual replacement. Heidegger claims that the end of traditional metaphysics is due to the forgetfulness of the meaning of Being, namely, that "Being is not other than time." ("The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics," in *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* [New York, 1962], 3:213, 214). Although aware of Heidegger's position, Pannenberg does not provide a proper response to Heidegger's claims, but rather bypasses them in favor of a traditional Platonic dualism between Being (timeless eternity) and Time. Pannenberg's point is that without an absolute and comprehensive foundation, namely, God as the Absolute Infinite, not only theology but meaning in general are left groundless and meaningless. A temporal ground for theology is not even considered as a possibility to be discussed. Pannenberg explains that Plotinus is the one who thus far has most correctly understood the proper connection between Being and Time (pp. 76-78). The conception of God as the Infinite should be built on the basis provided by Plotinus's insight. However, Pannenberg's interpretation of Plotinus's understanding of Being and Time is not totally clear and convincing. Pannenberg reserves for Plotinus's interpretation of Beyond Time a central role which requires a deeper analysis than the brief mention made by Pannenberg.

Pannenberg recognizes his dependence on Schleiermacher (pp. 162-164). However, he seems to depart from Schleiermacher in a very important point. For Schleiermacher religious experience is caused by a noncognitive "encounter" with God, who is conceived as the "Whence" or "codetermination" of the actual content of religious experience (*The Christian Faith* [Edinburgh, 1928], 4.4; 5.1). For Pannenberg religious experience is caused by "the whole of reality itself that is present to us" as a "vague presence of reality itself, world, self, and God as yet undifferentiated" (p. 161). Since Pannenberg claims that the ground for metaphysics is provided by religious experience, religion is the foundation for philosophy, and not vice-versa (pp. 11-14). Hegel's view that the role of philosophy is to bring into "conceptual expression [*auf den Begriff*] the truth that had already appeared in religion" is adopted by Pannenberg (p. 14). Even though Pannenberg does not try to make a systematic presentation of his personal interpretation of either the Idea of God or metaphysical

principles, he chooses to broadly follow Hegel's understanding of God and metaphysics. Consequently, Pannenberg adopts a neoclassical perspective that determines the broad profile of his metaphysical position. Within neoclassicism, Pannenberg's position represents an alternative to Whitehead's atomistic version of process philosophy (chap. 6). Pannenberg's idea of God as the Absolute-Infinite seems to allow for some kind of pantheism (p. 36) which is possible within the metaphysical horizon he develops in close dialogue with Plotinus (Being and Time), Hegel (Infinite Absolute), Dilthey (historicity of human experience), and Schleiermacher (structure and role of religious experience). *Metaphysics and the Idea of God* represents a clear effort towards a technical clarification of the philosophical ideas that stand at the foundation of Pannenberg's theological project and may be considered helpful to clear "the ground sufficiently" for his "three-volume *Systematic Theology*" (p. viii). A serious systematic treatment of the issues hinted at in this study, however, is still needed if Pannenberg envisions providing his theological thinking with solid philosophical foundations.

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Thompson, Alden. *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1991). 332 pages. \$15.95.

Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers grows out of Alden Thompson's spiritual (p. 15), intellectual (p. 249), and professional (p. 253) experiences. It is written in order to encourage students and intellectually-oriented believers to develop a firm sense of confidence in the authority of the Bible (p. 243), by overcoming the fear created by the so-called "domino effect." The "domino effect" is the negative experience of discovering the existence of even a minor imperfection in the Bible while, at the same time, holding to an inerrant view of inspiration. The "domino effect" or "slippery slope" may lead to a total loss of confidence in the Bible and even to atheism. If there is even one "error" in the Bible, why should we have confidence in it at all? The author's experience testifies to the possibility of overcoming the "domino effect" and living in the joy of "still believing" after seeing the human side of the Bible. This very well-organized study is written by an Adventist professor of biblical studies, addressing an Adventist, North American audience.

The book is divided into four parts. After a general introduction, the first part consists of a presentation of two documents penned by Ellen White and introduced as "Adventism's classic statements on Inspiration" (p. 21). The author wants the reader to have a taste of the same ideas he found helpful in solving the problems presented by the human side of Scripture. The second part deals with the theoretical understandings that made his experience possible. Notable among them are inspiration and God's Law. This part of the book also deals with the canon, manuscripts, translations, and the way the Bible as a book should be considered—that is, not as a codebook, but as a casebook. The third part constitutes a systematic introduction to the problematic and less-known phenomena of Scripture, as perceived by a biblical exe-